



The Weekly Page

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Pages Learn About Legislature



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

Legislators crack down on smoking drivers

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Olivia Motola and Sami Steere introduced House Bill 2424, which addresses the issue of drivers who smoke with minors in the car. “The bill is a good one because it will protect the children from second-hand smoke that may be harmful to their developing bodies,” said Rep. Motola. An experiment was performed in California



that showed that the toxins in the backseat of a vehicle where someone is smoking is 30 times higher than the level at which an unhealthy air alert is triggered. Children are normally sitting in the backseat where the toxins would be at a higher rate. If this bill is passed, it would require police officers to pull over a driver who is smoking if a child is in the vehicle, and they can be fined \$175. A second offense would be double.

Music education: an academic high note

Olympia – House Bill 2875 was introduced yesterday by Representative Elizabeth Ross. “This bill addresses the issue of music education and will ensure that students in Washington State will have a well rounded education,” said Rep. Ross. The bill entitles school districts to funds to support these programs if they cannot afford music classes. Funds for districts in need will come from cutting honors and advance classes from the classrooms of the schools. “Students will be allowed to take their advanced classes in a college setting if they wish to take that extra step in furthering their education,” explained Rep. Ross.

Reps ban plastic bags

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Eleanor Hall Watson and Molly Ichikawa introduced House Bill 2215, which addresses the issue of plastic bags. “The bill is a good one because it will reduce the impact on our environment,” said Rep. Hall Watson. Research shows that over 12 million barrels of oil per year are used in order to make the plastic bags needed by American consumers. In addition, thousands of sea creatures are killed due to the plastic bags not being recycled. Plastic bags also create pollution and take 1,000 years or more to decompose. This bill bans the use of plastic bags in retail and grocery stores.





Drop out bill proposed

Olympia – Senate Bill 5555 was introduced yesterday by Senator Dylan Turner. “This bill addresses the issue of high school drop outs and will require completion of high school,” said Sen. Turner. Drop out rates have increased to a drastic level and have contributed to increased drug and alcohol activity in local areas. If this bill passes, families of students who drop out before they graduate will be fined \$200, according to Sen. Turner.



Serious fiscal crisis may result in new taxes

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Nathan Noel, Maraya Andraca, Trevor Moyes, Cory Franklin, Erik Anderson, Carter Morgan, Teddy McCullough, Grace Blackmon, Megan Quick and Ian Dangla regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We want to cause as little suffering as possible, but we are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we’ve seen in decades,” said Rep. McCullough. Among the list of cuts offered were suspend-



ing the raises for home care workers, teachers, and body guards for the state’s Governor. “I don’t like what we have had to propose,” said Rep. Moyes, “but we simply have to bite the bullet.” Although many legislators had made campaign promises to forgo raising taxes, the committee saw a need to make up for lost revenues by adding a 50 cent tax on cigarettes, a \$1 tax on liquor, and a five cent tax on soft drinks. In addition, the lawmakers suggested taxing golf and bowling lessons, and raising the gasoline tax. Rep. Morgan rationalized that soft drinks and cigarettes are bad for a person’s health and that taxing these two products will actually save health care dollars in the future. “I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now,” said Rep. Quick.

New bill will allow high school students to sleep in

Olympia – Senate Bill 5000 was introduced yesterday by Senators Phoebe Sinclair and Hania Marien. “This bill addresses the issue of high school starting times and will enhance the academic performance of teenagers,” said Sen. Sinclair. Research has found that teenagers have a natural biological tendency to stay up late and wake up later. Multiple studies have shown that students perform better academically if they start school later because they get the amount of sleep needed. According to an NSF poll, 60 percent of children under the age of 18 complain of being tired during the day, and 15 percent said that they fell asleep at school sometime during the year. If this bill becomes law, public high schools will not be allowed to start before 8:30 a.m.



Does age matter?

Olympia – House Bill 3333 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Caleb Nolta, Steven Long, and Taylor Lamb. “This bill addresses the issue of minors being tried as adults and will forbid that practice,” said Rep. Nolta. In a recent finding, one third of 11-13 year olds could not understand proceedings by a lawyer and could not help their attorney defend them. Most children under the age of 16 had as much difficulty grasping the complex legal proceedings as adults who had been ruled incompetent to go to court. This law would forbid minors, those under the age of 18, from being tried in adult courts, no matter what the crime. “Sending a youngster to prison at a young age ruins their lives,” said Rep. Long.



Pages write bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the



state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday with their partners. Hard decisions had to be made about cutting services and/or raising taxes in the budget committees. Topics for social bills included plastic bag pollution, smoking while driving in cars with minor passengers, and compulsory vaccinations.

MAPS to better scores: Reps propose elimination of WASL

Olympia – House Bill 1021 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Katherine Wilson and Nic Jensen. “This bill addresses the issue of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning high school graduation requirement and will replace the WASL with the MAPS test,” said Rep. Wilson. Because of low pass rates of low-income students and



American Indian, Black, and Hispanic children, and because the WASL is a costly test, costing approximately \$27 to score compared to the \$3 to score a standardized achievement test. The bill proposes the replacement of the WASL with the MAPS test as a measure of progress. “The money saved by switching tests would be used to fund tutors and programs to insure equal opportunities and fair testing for low-income and non-Asian minority children and to ensure accurate results,” said Rep. Jensen.

Saving the earth: one car at a time

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Aaron Spieldenner introduced House Bill 2369, which addresses the issue of human influences on climate change. “The bill is a good one because it will lower the amount of CO2 emissions that are put into our air,” said Rep. Spieldenner. If the bill becomes law only hybrids and hydrogen-powered cars will be able to be sold in the state of Washington after the year 2016.

Plastic bag danger!

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Jack Casey and Olivia Domingo introduced House Bill 2931, which addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution by retail and grocery stores. “The bill is a good one because it will improve environmental health,” Rep. Casey said. This bill would require the government to stop spending money on plastic bag production and raise money to create cheap, reusable grocery bags. “Plastic bags are ruining the ecosystem and causing environmental problems,” said Rep. Domingo.



Guest speakers visit Page School

Representative Zach Hudgins (D-11th), Representative Sam Hunt (D-22nd), and Detectives Shelby Wilcox and Kim Holmes, and Sgt. Jesse Regalado of the Washington State Patrol Task Force for Missing and Exploited Children joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker's questions.



Bryant and Julagay to banish noise pollution

Olympia – Senate Bill 6023 was introduced yesterday by Senators Cole Bryant and Josiah Julagay. “This bill addresses the issue of car safety and will end the loud music associated with younger drivers,” said Sen. Bryant. If the bill was to become a law, cars would not be able to exceed the decibel level of 90. Our bill will only be a secondary law, so if you get pulled over for speeding you will also be punished for the loud music in your car that distracts the other drivers. Senator Josiah Julagay said, “this law will decrease accidents on the road.”

Senate tries to balance budget

Olympia—Yesterday Senators Sierra Steinbrecher, Matty Rathke, Cole Rabinowitz, Donald Kimball, Blake Scully, and Tyler Aspinwall met with the Senate Ways and Means Commit-

tee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some taxes,” said Sen. Rathke. Among the suggested products slated for a tax increase were soda pop, cigarettes and liquor. Other proposals included legalizing gambling on electric slot machines. “This could bring in \$80 million in revenue,” said Sen. Kimball. Closing the state film office was another option which would add several million dollars.

“Unfortunately, there is no easy fix for this situation,” said Sen. Steinbrecher. “Everyone is going to have to tighten his belt and make sacrifices.”



Vaccinations required

Olympia – Senate Bill 6119 was introduced yesterday by Senators Gabe Lungstrom and Dakota Oblad. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood vaccination and should prevent disease outbreaks in our state,” said Sen. Lungstrom. This bill would



enforce vaccination requirements for all children. It also addresses the issue of foreign travelers arriving in the U.S. through Washington State ports who are ill. Foreigners would be detained for 24

hours if they show serious symptoms upon entering customs. “This may seem expensive but will save money by keeping people healthy,” said Sen. Oblad.

New sports safety bill proposed

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Kayla Long and Audri Henderson introduced Senate Bill 6262, which addresses the issue of sports related injuries. An increasing number of concussions and related neurological symptoms have been found to be caused by a lack of proper head protection in full-contact sports. “The bill is a good one because it will help reduce the number of concussions and related symptoms such as memory loss, depression, coma, and death,” said Sen. Henderson. This bill will require all players participating in full-contact sports to wear a certified helmet with a score of 500 or lower. It will also require injured players to undergo neuro-cognitive tests to measure their pre-season and post-concussion reactions/ “Many kids won’t admit they’re hurt,” said Sen. Long.

Mock committees debate bills, vote

Simulated committee hearings were held on Thursday. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.



I-1000 modification called for

Olympia – Senate Bill 7793 was introduced yesterday by Senator Emily Hull. “This bill addresses the recently passed Initiative 1000, or ‘Death with Dignity’ Act, and will ensure that the medication of terminally ill patients is self-administered,” said Sen. Hull. “It is not clearly stated in the initiative who shall administer the lethal overdose of medication to the terminally-ill patient. This bill will add language to make sure that the terminally-ill patient must self-administer the lethal overdose of medication,” explained Sen. Hull.

Students Free at Last!

Olympia – Senate Bill 6003 was introduced yesterday by Senators Jennifer Wetli and Katherine Schroeder. “This bill addresses the issue of freedom of the press in school newspapers and will allow students to have full rights at their high schools and colleges,” said Sen. Schroeder. Bill 6003 will eliminate the ability of school authorities to edit the school papers. This issue was brought to lawmakers’ attention after 7,000 copies of a school newspaper were stolen after a controversial article was printed,” said Sen. Wetli.



Bill takes aim at unemployment

Olympia – Senate Bill 5456 was introduced yesterday by Senator Dalton Cole. “This bill addresses the issue of unemployment and will lower state rates for out-of-work citizens,” said Sen. Cole. Legislators hope to find more jobs for homeless citizens if this bill becomes law. It will require homeless citizens to visit an unemployment office a minimum of twice a year.

Page School teachers begin new year

The Washington State Legislature’s 2009 Page School employs teachers Judi Orr, a certificated teacher, and Matt Kreiling, former Legislative intern and lobbyist. Judi is a retired social studies and English

teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Matt lobbied for the Washington Student Lobby representing college students throughout Washington. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions.



Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional.



Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/. This newsletter has been posted there.

